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"THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE" EPHESIANS 2:11-22

This Week's Core Competency

Church – I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth today. Ephesians 4:15, 16 *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

We use the word "church" frequently like we use the words "synagogue" and "temple" to refer to a building. However, the term is not used like that in the New Testament. The word is most frequently used to refer to congregations of believers in expressions like "the church at Jerusalem" (Ac 8:1), "the church at Antioch" (Ac 13:1), or "the church that meets at their home," the home of Aquila and Priscilla (Ro 16:5). Then there are, of course, the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation: "the church in Ephesus" (2:1), "the church in Smyrna" (v.8), "the church in Pergamum" (v. 12), and so on. The term can also be used to designate several local churches in a region, which seems to be the case in Acts 8:31, "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit; it grew in numbers, living in the

I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

- Jesus

fear of the Lord."

The word is also used in the New Testament to refer to believers in Christ who together form his one body, the "church." Paul uses the term this way in Ephesians 1:22, 23. Speaking about Christ he says, "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body . . ." He also uses it this way in 5:29 when he says to husbands, "After all no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body." Talking about the body of Christ, the church, in the same letter Paul writes, "There is one body" (5:4) but that one body is made up of many parts (1Co 12:12, 14) with different functions all of which are indispensable (vv. 15-26). Believers are the body of Christ and each one is part of that body (vv. 27). What's more, God has placed each one in the body for its good so that it might be built up (Eph 4:13). From Christ, its head, "the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (v. 16).

In Ephesians 2:19-22 the one body is pictured as one building built on the foundation of the New Testament apostles and prophets (4:11) with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (v. 20). As it is being built, it becomes apparent that this one building under construction is rising "to become a holy temple in the Lord." Believing Gentiles and believing Jews together are being built into a dwelling place "in which God lives by his Spirit" (v. 22).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)- 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by

which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. NIV(c)1984)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 11.
- * Underline "formerly" in v. 11, "at that time" in v. 12, "now" in v. 13, "no longer" in v. 19 indicating *time*.
- * Circle "uncircumcised" and "circumcision" in v. 11.
- * Number what Gentiles "were" in v. 12.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 13.
- * Bracket "far" and "near" in v. 13.
- * Box "for" indicating *explanation* in v. 14.
- * Circle "peace" in v. 14.
- * Box "to create" and "to reconcile" indicating *purpose* in vv. 15, 16.
- * Circle "body" in v. 16.
- * Bracket "far" and "near" in v. 17.
- * Box "for" (Gk. *hoti*, "so that") indicating *result* in v. 18.
- * Box "consequently" indicating *result* in v. 19.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 19.
- * Circle "chief cornerstone" in v. 20.
- * Circle "holy temple" in v. 21.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. To what time does "formerly" and "at that time" refer?
2. List the five privileges God had given to the nation Israel not given to Gentiles.
3. Explain the *contrast* in verse 13.
4. What did Jesus destroy and how did he destroy it?
5. Verse 15b refers to him "making peace." How so?
6. Verse 16 refers to "their hostility." Whose hostility?
7. How can Paul say what he said about Jesus in verse 17? He never preached to Gentiles did he?
8. Explain the *contrast* in verse 19.
9. Christ Jesus is called the "chief cornerstone" in verse 20. Explain the significance of that metaphor.
10. **Discussion:** Paul refers to a building under construction in verse 21. Discuss what he is talking about.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

It's next to impossible to jump into the middle of one of Paul's letters without jumping into the middle of one of his logical arguments. Ephesians 2:11-22 begins on the note of "therefore" (v. 11) and ends on the note of "consequently" (v. 19). Clearly what he says in these twelve verses is logically connected to what he said in the first ten verses. In these opening verses Paul tells his Gentile readers that they, who were once dead in their transgressions and sins, as well as Jews, who were in the same condition, have been made alive with Christ (v. 5) and have been seated with him in heavenly realms (v. 6). God did this, Paul says, in order to demonstrate the "incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (v. 7).

Verses 11-22 can be divided into three parts. In the first (vv. 11-13), Paul contrasts the relationship of Gentiles to Jews *before* Christ with their relationship to them *after* Christ. Their before and after relationship is evident in the words "formerly" (v. 11) and "at that time" (v. 12), on one hand, versus "now" (v. 13) on the other. Five things were true of them. One, they were "separate from Christ," which means as Gentiles they had no messianic hope; they were not looking for the coming of the Messiah. Two, they were "excluded from citizenship in Israel," which means they were not sons of Jacob whom God had formed into unique nation. Three, they were "foreigners to the covenants of the promise," which means they had no claim to the promised blessings contained in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants. Blessings promised in these covenants might accrue to Gentiles (e.g., Ge 12:3), but they had to right to them. Four, they were "without hope," which means that the sure expectations guaranteed in the covenants did not belong to them. Five, they were "without God," which means while they may have believed in gods, they did not know the one true God. Paul uses the Greek adjective *atheos*, from which we get our English word "atheist," to describe them. Taken together, "The religious privileges inherited by the Jews were substantial: not only were they 'entrusted with the oracles of God' (Rom. 3:2), but, as Paul emphasizes in Rom. 9:4-5, 'to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ.' From all those privileges the Gentiles had

been cut off" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT, 293).

That is what Gentiles were before Christ, "but now in Christ" Paul says things have changed dramatically. Gentiles who were once "far away" are now "near" as a result of Christ's death on the cross. These terms, "far" and "near," were used in the Old Testament to describe Gentile nations as "far off" (Dt 28:49; 29:22; 1Ki 8:41; Isa 5:26; Jer 5:15) and Israel as "near" (Ps 148:14). In the present context they're used to describe believing Gentiles who have been brought near to God, not by being turned into Jews but by being included with believing Jews in Christ Jesus.

In the second (vv. 14-18) Paul explains *what* Christ did to change the relationship of Gentiles to Jews and *why* he did it. As one writer says, "Having discussed the new union of Jews and Gentiles in Christ in light of their former disunion, Paul now gives a further explanation of how this union was accomplished" (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 363). In addition to his use of "for" (Gk. *gar*), the fact that verse 19 picks up where verse 13 leaves off is another indication that the apostle paused in these verses to elaborate on what Christ did to bring Gentiles near and why. What did he do? In a nutshell, Paul says Christ, "our peace," ended the hostility between Gentiles and Jews and made the two one by replacing the hostility between them with mutual acceptance (v. 14). Jews traditionally had nothing to do with Gentiles (cf., Ac 10:27, 28). Circumcision, emblematic of the reason for that segregation, often led to hostility towards Gentiles on the part of Jews and hatred towards Jews on the part of Gentiles. Jews were put off by the abominable unlawful practices of Gentiles (cf., Ac 15:20, 21, 29), and Gentiles were put off by the self-righteous legalism of Jews. Christ put an end to that by nullifying the law. Since neither Jews nor Gentiles in Christ are governed by its commandments and regulations, it can no longer divide them (v. 15a). Why did he do it? In a nutshell, Paul says Christ did it to "create in himself one new man out of the two" and to "reconcile both of them to God through the cross" (v. 15b, 16). What's more, following his death and resurrection, Christ preached peace to both through his prophets and apostles, both of whom now have equal access to the Father by the Spirit.

In the third (vv. 19-22) Paul describes the results of what Christ did especially as it pertains to Gentiles. "Consequently" looks back to verse 13. "But now in

Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ . . . Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household . . ." No longer are Gentiles outsiders without spiritual privileges; now they're "fellow citizens." Together with the saints of all ages (i.e., "God's people"), they belong to God's family (i.e., "are members of God's household"). One writer summarizes the situation this way: "The saints are fellow citizens with the redeemed of all ages. Before Abraham, there were saints who were members of the household of God. After Abraham, the saints were those Jews who truly believed God, as did their father Abraham (Rom 4:12). These were fellow saints of former generations who were members of the household of God. In the present time, those Jews and Gentiles redeemed by Christ's death have formed a new entity called the church. Those in the new entity are saints who are fellow citizens with all the saints of past generations, who are also members of God's household. None of the succeeding generations of saints replaces the former generation, but all join as members of God's household or family. Though there may be distinctions, they are all fellow citizens. Though there may be differences, there are no inferiors or superiors. All the saints of every generation believed that God was involved with their redemption and reconciliation. They all had access to God and they all had fellowship with God and other saints. The believers today are neither Jews

nor Gentiles but are Christians who pray and give praise to God as all the saints in former generations" (396).

Paul goes on to *metaphorically* describe the new relationship that Gentiles enjoy. Perhaps the term "household" triggered the image of a building in the apostle's mind. Regardless, he speaks of the members of God's household being built into a single building "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (v. 20). New Testament apostles and prophets are the building's foundation; Christ Jesus himself is the building's cornerstone, the most important stone in its foundation. A building's cornerstone was no mere decorative stone. "In ancient building practices 'the chief cornerstone' was carefully placed. It was crucial because the entire building was lined up with it. The church's foundation, that is, the apostles and prophets, needed to be correctly aligned with Christ. All other believers are built on that foundation, measuring their lives with Christ" (Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 627). That one building—"there is one body" (Eph 4:4)—now under construction "rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" in which Gentiles, who were once far off, are being built together with Jews "to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (v. 22). Praise be to Christ in whom both believing Jews and believing Gentiles are truly blessed!

The Message of the Passage

Gentiles, who are no longer far away having been brought near by Christ who made both Jews and Gentiles one and reconciled them both to God, are being built together with Jews into one holy temple in which God lives by his Spirit.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

- **Reflect on the significance of the passage:** Think about what God wants you to know, how God wants you to feel, and what God wants you to do . . .

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 11 **uncircumcised** Jews used this contemptuous nickname to refer to Gentiles. "The Jews were widely known in the ancient world as those who were circumcised. They were proud of the distinctiveness of circumcision, a God-ordained covenantal sign that goes back to Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14). Paul, in his preconversion days, was proud to state that he was 'circumcised on the eighth day' (Phil 3:5), and it seems that Jews were zealous to have Gentiles circumcised so that they could come under the covenant (Gal 6:12-13; cf. 5:2-6, 11; Phil 3:2-3)" (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 354). This physical difference was emblematic of the spiritual difference between Jews and Gentiles.
- v. 12 **Christ** Cf., "without Messiah" (the NET Bible). Gentiles had "no expectation of a Messiah to light up their darkness. They knew nothing at all about him" (A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:39). "The Gentiles were not only separate from Christ personally, which was true also of many Jews, but moreover, they had no national hope of the Messiah as did Israel. Israel had this hope because of OT revelation of the promised Messiah" (Hoehner, 355).
- v. 12 **covenants** These covenants include the Abrahamic (Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:1-8, the Davidic (2Sa 7:16; Ps 89:1-4), and the New (Jer 31:31-34; Eze 36:24-30).
- v. 14 **peace** "Not only has he reconciled his people to God through his death but he has reconciled them to each other; in particular, he has reconciled those of Jewish birth to those of Gentile birth. To say that he is our peace sets forth the truth more emphatically than to say that he has 'made peace' (v. 15) or 'proclaimed peace' (v. 17). It is in him, as fellow-members of his body, that his people enjoy their twofold peace" (Bruce, 295).
- v. 14 **barrier** Cf., "who destroyed the middle wall of partition, the hostility" (the NET Bible), i.e., the wall of hostility founded on the law. "Various interpretations have been given regarding this 'dividing wall,' which is mentioned only here in the New Testament. Some have thought it refers to the wall in the Jerusalem temple precincts that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Jews . . . Some think it referred to the curtain in the Jerusalem temple between the holy place and the holy of holies . . . The structure of the Greek words suggests that the dividing wall describes not a physical barrier, but the spiritual enmity between Jews and Gentiles, which separated them. Since Christ destroyed this enmity (cf., v. 16), Jewish and Gentile believers should have no hostility" (Hoehner, "Ephesians," 625, 26).
- v. 14 **abolishing** "Or 'rendered inoperative.' This is a difficult text to translate because it is not easy to find an English term, which communicates well the essence of the author's meaning, especially since legal terminology is involved. Many other translations use the term "abolish" (so NRSV, NASB, NIV), but this term implies complete destruction which is not the author's meaning here. The verb [*katargeo*] can readily have the meaning 'to cause someth. to lose its power or effectiveness' (BDAG 525 s.v. 2, where this passage is listed), and this meaning fits quite naturally here within the author's legal mindset. A proper English term which communicates this well is "nullify" since this word carries the denotation of 'making something legally null and void'" (the NET Bible, 29^{tn} on Eph 2:15).
- v. 17 **preached** Peace "was proclaimed by him to Jews and Gentiles by means of the ministry of the Holy Spirit through his apostles (cf. Eph 3:5-6)" (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 385).
- v. 19 **foreigners and aliens** The two terms are nearly synonymous. "The first is like a tourist traveling in a foreign land which has an agreement with the traveler's land of origin that gives him travel rights. The second is like a person who is legally residing in a foreign country with a residence visa. Neither are citizens nor do they have all the privileges of the citizens in that land" (392).
- v. 19 **God's people** Lit., "the saints" (ESV, NRSV, NKJV). "Believing Gentiles together with believing Jews have become 'fellow citizens with the saints' of all ages, even those before the formation of Israel" (394).
- v. 20 **prophets** Not OT prophets but NT prophets (Eph 3:5; 4:11).
- v. 20 **chief cornerstone** "The cornerstone was the first stone laid. The builder was very careful to properly set this stone. Lloyd states, 'The *acrogoniaios* here is the primary foundation-stone at the angle of structure by which the architect fixes a standard for the bearing of the walls and cross-walls throughout.' In fact, in Isa 28:16 it is called a testing stone or literally 'a stone of testing.' It is that stone by which every other stone in the foundation and the superstructure must be measured. Thus, the building of the new person, the church, must be in conformity with the cornerstone, Jesus Christ" (407).
- v. 21 **holy temple** "The word used for temple is not *hieron*, which includes the entire precincts, but *naos*, the inner shrine. The temple image is applied in the NT both to the individual and the church. For three hundred years Christians had no buildings of their own. The true temple is the whole church" (Wood, 42).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

It's construction time! This week our passage speaks of Jesus being the Chief Cornerstone of the church. While the text is speaking in spiritual terms, try this fun family activity to begin talking about the passage. For Family Time this week have a building theme. This is a great activity to do with another family, your home group or when your kids have friends sleeping over. Wear a hardhat or tool belt for extra fun if you have one. You can build your own pizzas and ice cream sundaes. Divide into groups of two and give each group some building materials (legos, blocks, sugar cubes, marshmallows, crackers, be creative!). Tell kids you will be judging their structures and awards will be given. (Sturdiest Structure, Biggest Building, Crazy Construction, etc.) Let each person take a turn describing their building and its unique features. Another idea is to combine your materials and create one large structure. At the end of your evening, build a simple fort large enough for everyone to get in and talk to your family about the importance of church. Why do we go to church? What is your favorite part of church? Who does your family know that doesn't go to church? How can you pray for them? You are building lasting faith in your kids and that foundation is firm and secure!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Ephesians 2:19-22

1. According to verse 19, who's household do we belong to?
2. Who is the Chief Cornerstone?
3. Does the Holy Spirit live in a building or in people?

What Do You Think

A cornerstone is the most important stone in a structure. Other stones are positioned and laid according to the cornerstone. What do you think it means for Jesus to be the Chief Cornerstone of the church? Write the name Jesus on a stone and place it outside your front door. He is the foundation of your home.

What R U Going To Do

Special note for parents: In this eight week series we are asking kids to memorize the entire passage of Philippians 2:5-11. We are breaking it down into weekly segments. This beautiful passage teaches us about the powerful name of Jesus. Thank you for helping your child work on this passage throughout our series.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Church - I believe God uses the people in the church to do His work.

Memory Verse

Philippians 2:7 "but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than thirty-five years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-four years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.